REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated February 22, 2008. Claims 1, 3 to 5, 9, 11, 13 to 15, 19 and 20 are pending in the application, of which Claims 1 and 19 are independent. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claim 20 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101 for allegedly being directed to non-statutory subject matter. Without conceding the correctness of the rejection, Applicants have amended the claim to clarify that it is directed to a computer-readable storage medium storing a computer-executable control program. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

Claims 1 to 4, 14, 19 and 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,075,787 (Shaughnessy). Claims 1 to 3, 5 to 9, 12 and 15 to 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,903,838 (Hanson). Claims 10, 11 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Hanson in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,577,164 (Kaneko). Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 19.

Turning to specific claim language, amended independent Claim 1 is directed to an image processing method in an image processing apparatus. First, a document image is read by the image processing apparatus. Next, an identification step is performed that identifies, based upon document format, whether or not the read document image contains settings information. After identification is complete, the document will

either be print-processed according to existing settings or will be used by the system to set new settings. If the document image has not been identified as being a document image containing settings information, a processing step transmits the read document image to the printing unit and print-processes the read document image in accordance with settings information previously stored in the data table. If the read document image has been identified as being a document image containing settings information, a setting step writes the settings information into the data table, so that a document image later read is print-processed in accordance with the settings information. The settings information on the read document image may be only a subset of the total settings information within the data table, in which case only that subset of settings information will be written into the data table, overwriting any existing corresponding data settings.

Therefore, a method in accordance with Claim 1 includes the features of:

(1) an identification step that identifies whether or not the read document image contains settings information based on document format,

(2) a processing step which sends the image to the printing unit if the document does not contain settings information, and

(3) a setting step which places the setting information into the data table, if the document does contain setting information. This setting information may only be a subset of the settings in the data table, rather than a complete set of data, and there are two possible scenarios regarding this situation:

(a) If the newly read document image references a previously read document image, settings from the previously read document image are first written into the data table; then the subset of settings contained on the newly read document are written

into the data table, replacing any corresponding settings written by the previously read, referenced document, or

(b) If the newly read document image does not reference a previously read document image, the default settings information is first written into the data table; then the subset of settings contained on the newly read document are written into the data table, replacing the corresponding default settings.

Thus, the present invention is based on the premise that the document images to be processed by the image processing apparatus include multiple document images to be print-processed, as well as multiple document images carrying settings information interspersed throughout the images to be print-processed..

Accordingly, when modifying settings within the data table using the present invention, a user can use one setting document to reference another setting document which was previously read into the system. The previously read setting document may carry settings information similar to the settings information to be altered by the new document. By allowing the user to alter a subset of the settings information included in the data table, the present invention allows for a more efficient system of print-processing and reduces the potential for user error by limiting the amount of data that the user must input. When print-processing of multiple documents requires multiple settings of the image processing apparatus, the present invention allows print-processing to be performed with less user intervention. If only a single setting, or any subset of the settings in the data table, needs altering from a previously read document, only that single setting, or only that subset of settings, need be entered in the newly read document, thereby reducing the potential for error caused by unnecessary user input of multiple settings.

In contrast, Shaughnessy discloses an image processing method that determines whether a read image carries settings information. In addition, Hanson discloses that an identification mark containing settings information is detected on a document and the settings information is set upon such detection. However, these cited references are not based on the premise that the multiple document images to be processed by the image processing apparatus include multiple document images to be print processed as well as multiple document images carrying settings information interspersed throughout the documents to be print-processed. Therefore, these cited references fail to disclose that settings information set in the data table may be altered multiple times by multiple document images carrying settings information, each of which may contain a subset of settings data and a reference to previous setting documents as featured in the present invention.

In light of these deficiencies of Shaughnessy and Hanson, Applicant submits that amended independent Claim 1 is now in condition for allowance and respectfully requests same.

Amended independent Claim 19 is directed to an image processing apparatus substantially in accordance with the method of Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicant submits that Claim 19 is also now in condition for allowance and respectfully requests same.

The other pending claims in this application are each dependent from the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed allowable for the same reasons. Because each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the

invention, however, the individual consideration of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

On another matter, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner acknowledge receipt of the priority document filed January 27, 2004.

CONCLUSION

No claim fees are believed due; however, should it be determined that additional claim fees are required, the Director is hereby authorized to charge such fees to Deposit Account 06-1205.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, CA office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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